DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 000 CE 046 209

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TITLE Connecting. A Guidebook for Community Education Council Effectiveness. Target Topic Series.
INSTITUTION College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN. Community Education Center.
SPONS AGENCY Mott (C.S.) Foundation, Flint, Mich.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 29p.; For other guidebooks in this series, see CE 046 203-211.
AVAILABLE FROM The Community Education Center, College of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55101 ($3.50).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Advisory Committees; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Community Education; Efficiency; Group Dynamics; *Group Unity; *Leadership; *Organizational Communication; *Organizational Effectiveness; Pretests Posttests

ABSTRACT

This guidebook is one in the Target Topic Series developed to highlight issues and concerns related to effective community education operation. It is intended for the community education advisory council member who wants to improve the effectiveness of the council. The material is designed to improve the atmosphere of the council to allow the members to participate and express their ideas and opinions. A pretest covers material discussed in the guidebook. The guidebook covers leadership, communication, and group cohesion skills. It defines leadership, communication, and group cohesion; describes two functions and roles of leadership; describes the skills needed to communicate effectively; and describes the factors of group cohesiveness. The material includes practice exercises to evaluate the council in relation to leadership, communication, and group cohesion and discusses these areas in relationship to each other in building the effectiveness of the council. A posttest repeats the pretest questions. (YLB)

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TARGET TOPIC SERIES

CONNECTING

A GUIDEBOOK FOR

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS

SALLY SWENINGSON

The TARGET TOPIC SERIES is made possible by a grant from
The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

And is produced by

The Community Education Center
College of St. Thomas
2115 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105

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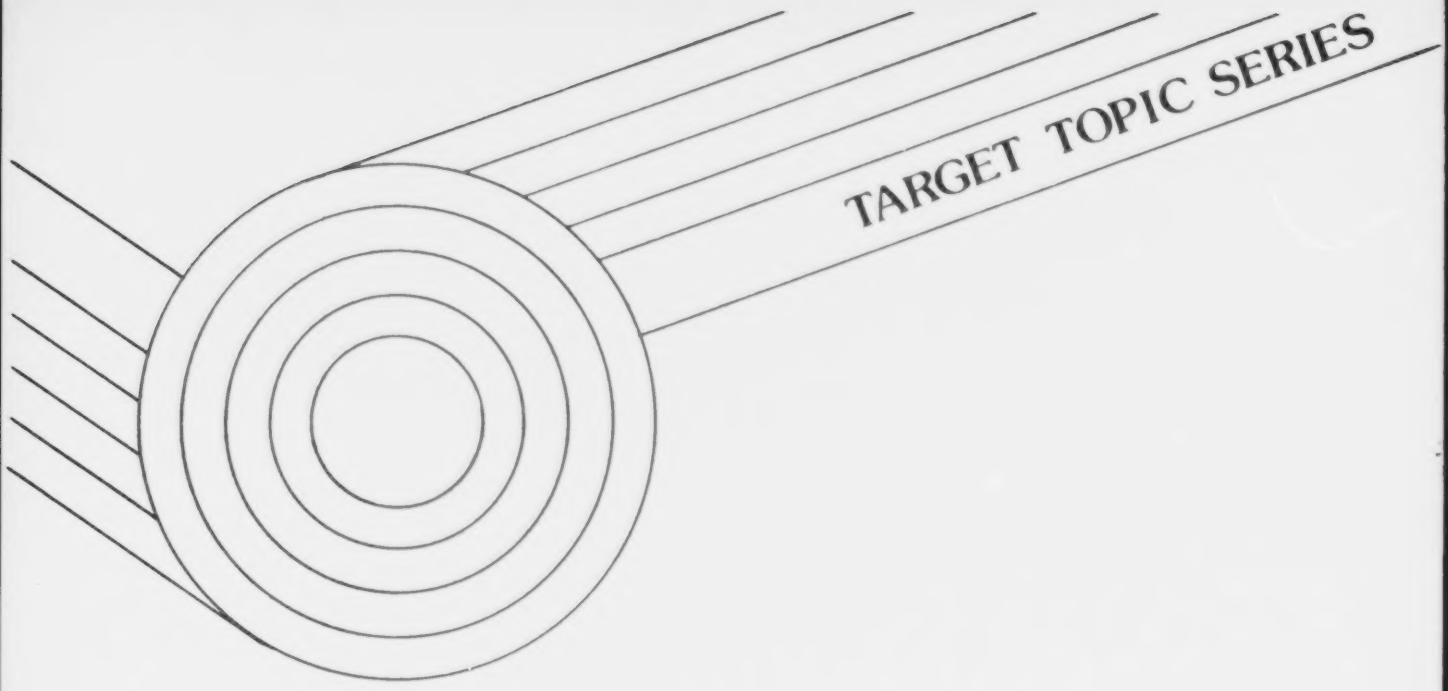


THE TARGET TOPIC SERIES

The Target Topic Series is a set of guidebooks developed for Community Educators and Community Education advisory council members. The guidebooks discuss many topics related to effective Community Education operation: Council Skills, Community Assessment, Planning, Public Relations, Finance, Programming, Legal Questions, Staff Development, Community Involvement, Coordination and Cooperation, and Evaluation.

The Target Topic Series is designed to highlight the skills or the issues that relate to each subject; and presents an overview which should be of value to the reader.

The Series was developed in response to an identified need for materials to aid and enrich the Community Education process in the state of Minnesota, particularly for areas that do not have ready access to inservice opportunities. The materials are applicable to Community Education programs throughout the country and are available for national distribution.

The Target Topic Series is written by staff members of the Community Education Center at the College of St. Thomas and by Community Education professionals in Minnesota. The series is distributed by the Community Education Center at the College of St. Thomas.

FOREWORD

Community Education is the process through which the community decides and provides for its educational, recreational and enrichment interests and finds solutions for community problems. The Advisory Council is the bridge that connects the people of the community with the professionals charged with implementing the Community Education concept.

The council has a serious responsibility and to meet this responsibility it must operate so that the feelings and knowledge of each member can be heard and understood.

This Guidebook has been written to help you make your council dynamic--a council in which your feelings, information, and opinions, and those of your fellow council members are listened to, respected, and heeded.

INTRODUCTION

This guidebook is for you, the advisory council member who wants to improve the effectiveness of your council. The material is designed to improve the atmosphere of the council to allow the members to participate and express their ideas and opinions. With the proper application of the skills in this guidebook, you and your council will be able to accomplish more and have a better working relationship with each other.

The guidebook covers leadership, communication, and group cohesion skills and will:

a. Define leadership, communication, and group cohesion.

b. Describe two functions and roles of leadership.

c. Describe the skills to communicate effectively.

d. Describe the factors of group cohesiveness.

The material includes practice exercises to evaluate your council in relation to leadership, communication, and group cohesion and discusses these areas in relationship to each other in building the effectiveness of the council.

The guidebook is not a comprehensive discussion of all the forces that affect council work but is intended as a start for your council in identifying some areas that need improvement.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

(The following questions cover the material which is discussed in this Guidebook. We suggest you answer them before reading the text. Your answers will point out your present level of knowledge and will make you aware of areas to which you should pay particular attention.)

1. How do you decide who holds a leadership role in a group?
2. What is leadership?
3. How does group-centered leadership differ from single-person leadership?
4. What are task functions in a group?
5. What are maintenance functions in a group?
6. Is the most effective council one that stresses task roles or one that stresses maintenance roles?
7. What is group communication?
8. What is the difference between one-way and two-way communication?
9. Define feedback and how it functions.
10. Why does the expression of members' feelings as well as their opinions contribute to effective communication?
11. What is an "I" message and why are "I" messages important to understanding?
12. What is the effect on members' reactions when verbal and non-verbal messages contradict each other?
13. What is group cohesiveness?
14. How does the size of a group affect group cohesiveness?
15. How does an effective council provide security and recognition for its members?
16. How are prestige and achievement needs of members met in a group that has strong group cohesion?
17. What efforts can groups make to build group cohesiveness?
18. How do group leadership, effective communication, and strong group cohesion combine to build a vital group?

HOW WELL DOES YOUR COUNCIL WORK?

The advisory council is a representative group of interested people who have a deciding voice in the Community Education of their school or school district. Because it is a representative body, each person on the council brings to the council his or her ideas as well as a point of view which represents others who are of the same mind. For example, if the representative on your council from the local churches speaks, he or she generally represents first herself and next her fellow church people. The point is, people on the council represent more than just themselves. If one person on the council does not speak up or voice an opinion or take part in discussion, the council loses the wisdom of that person, and a whole segment of population does not have a voice. It is for this reason that every member on your advisory council must participate in the group process. In order for each member to do so, the atmosphere of the council must be <u>open</u>, <u>accepting</u>, <u>supporting</u>, and <u>receptive</u>.

Perhaps your council already works very well, and members are free to express their opinions. Answer the following questions to see if you can spot any possible problems your council may have.

* Do members accept imposed agendas, goals, programs, and tasks without participating in their development?
* Is the communication primarily one-way, that is, do the director or chairperson do most of the talking?
* Is leadership only for a few people and do the rest follow?
* Are decisions always made by the highest authority with little or no involvement by the council members?
* Is the council evaluated only in relation to goals with little attention to how the group members feel towards each other?
* Are your meetings stiff and formal, do they often seem pointless and a waste of time?
* Is there little opportunity for council members to express opinions, feelings and reactions?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you aren't getting the most out of your council and need improvement.

LEADERSHIP

Whenever two or more people join together, there is a chance for leadership. If you are a council chairperson, director, coordinator, or council member, you and your advisory council can benefit from identifying and applying the skills of effective leadership.

Leadership is the action taken by one member of the group to try and influence the other members towards the goals of the group. Any member of the group is a leader when trying to influence another member or members to take the action he or she suggests. In a council meeting the leader's role may change several times depending upon the task at hand.

The advisory council functions best with group-centered leadership. In the group-centered form of leadership, the designated leader or chairperson views the council, including him or herself, as a group and not as an assortment of individuals. The group, not the chairperson, director, or coordinator, is responsible for setting goals and accomplishing them. In group-centered leadership, each of the members of the council has an equal responsibility to reach the goals of the group.

In group-centered leadership the following four things occur:

* The group or council is owned by all its members. They all feel a responsibility for contributing to its effectiveness through participation.

* The council is responsible for reaching decisions which are a product of every member. The council sets goals that are achievable by the group, and it achieves them.

* The council feels its responsibility to perform the necessary tasks to achieve its goals.

* Feelings, emotions, and conflicts are recognized and accepted as part of the process for arriving at the best solution of a problem or plan of attack on a task.

Keeping these four thoughts in mind, how are you going to develop leadership in your council? First we must realize

that all members have the capacity for leadership. Different people take different leadership roles at different times, and some of the roles are related to the task and some of them are related to maintaining a healthy group that can work together. All groups have task functions and maintenance functions.

The task function is goal related. It occurs when a member helps the council towards the goal by referring to the goal, giving directions, starting the actions, offering facts, bringing the council back to the goal at hand, and being directly concerned with the accomplishment of the goal.

The maintenance function is group related. It occurs when any member helps the group by encouraging members to take part in discussions, creating harmony among the members, helping to relieve tensions, building trust by supporting other members, promoting discussion of any problems experienced by the council members, and being involved in any action which would help to maintain the good working relationship of the group members.

After recognizing the two basic leadership functions that the council members must perform, it is necessary for your council to find out who is performing the tasks already. Each council member should respond to the following statements. Indicate by a check (✔) which statement best describes your behavior in the council meetings.

( ) 1. I often remind the members they are getting off the track in a discussion.

( ) 2. I often provide facts and information relevant to the subject.

( ) 3. I often listen carefully and explain what has been said when other members don't understand.

( ) 4. I often develop a plan of action to complete the task.

( ) 5. I make statements such as "come on, we can do better than that."

( ) 6. I try to find agreement between members when there is a conflict of ideas.

( ) 7. I ask other members how they feel about a decision.

( ) 8. I like to think about how workable the plans are and if they can help the council meet the goal.

( ) 9. I like to thank members when they participate in discussions or in any of the decisions.

( ) 10. I make sure everyone gets a chance to talk about a given topic.

( ) 11. I always ask questions about topics we discuss.

( ) 12. I usually tell a joke or make the work more fun.

( ) 13. I am aware of what is happening at the meetings and observe how the group could have worked together more effectively.

( ) 14. I often think up new tasks which the group can undertake.

( ) 15. I listen very carefully to what each member has to say before I make up my mind.

( ) 16. I compare the group's accomplishments with the goals we have established.

( ) 17. I ask the council to establish some group procedures.

( ) 18. I determine what is blocking the group from accomplishing a goal.

( ) 19. I try to get the members to be open about what is bothering them so the council can work together better.

( ) 20. I often show the relationship of the council's activities by pulling together the ideas of the various subgroups.

Check your responses to see which tasks you perform more frequently. The statements which indicate performance of tasks are 1,2,4,5,8,11,14,16,18, and 20. The statements which indicate performance of maintenance are 3,6,7,9,10,12,13,15,17, and 19. If your responses show that you have only a few of the characteristics it does not mean you cannot learn other task or maintenance functions; it only suggests what functions you are most comfortable doing.

You may find yourself doing both task and maintenance functions. This is not unusual. As a member of a group, you should be concerned that both task and maintenance functions are being performed. These functions are necessary to bring about group consensus on decisions concerning the council.

For further help in identifying task and maintenance functions, read over the following lists. Your council may want to discuss each role to determine if the role is being taken in your council and which member takes the major responsibility for each role.

Another suggestion for helping the council to be more at ease with the task and maintenance functions is to have each member select a specific function to perform at the next meeting. The different functions can then be seen in action and members can try a function they would not normally perform.

TASK ROLES

1. Information and Opinion Giver: Offers facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions, and relevant information to help group discussion.

2. Information and Opinion Seeker: Asks for facts, information, opinions, ideas, and feelings from other members to help group discussion.

3. Starter: Proposes goals and tasks to initiate action within the group.

4. Direction Giver: Develops plans on how to proceed and focuses attention on the task to be done.

5. Summarizer: Pulls together related ideas or suggestions and restates and summarizes major points discussed.

6. Coordinator: Shows relationships among various ideas by pulling them together and harmonizes activities of various subgroups and members.

7. Diagnoser: Determines sources of difficulties the group has in working effectively and the blocks to progress in accomplishing the group's goals.

8. Energizer: Stimulates a higher quality of work from the group.

9. Reality Tester: Examines the practicality and workability of ideas, evaluates alternative solutions, and applies them to real situations to see how they will work.

10. Evaluator: Compares group decisions and accomplishments with group standards and goals.

MAINTENANCE ROLES

1. Encourager of Participation: Warmly encourages everyone to participate, giving recognition for contributions, demonstrating acceptance and openness to ideas of others, is friendly and responsive to group members.

2. Harmonizer and Compromiser: Persuades members to analyze constructively their differences in opinions, searches for common elements in conflicts, and tries to reconcile disagreements.

3. Tension Reliever: Eases tensions and increases the enjoyment of group members by joking, suggesting breaks, and proposing fun approaches to group work.

4. Communication Helper: Shows good communication skills and makes sure that each group member understands what other members are saying.

5. Evaluator of Emotional Climate: Asks members how they feel about the way in which the group is working and about each other, and shares own feelings about both.

6. Process Observer: Watches the process by which the group is working and uses the observations to help examine group effectiveness.

7. Standard Setter: Expresses group standards and goals to make members aware of the direction of the work and the progress being made toward the goal and to get open acceptance of group norms and procedures.

8. Active Listener: Listens and serves as an interested audience for other members, is receptive to others' ideas, goes along with the group when not in disagreement.

9. Trust Builder: Accepts and supports openness of other group members, reinforcing risk taking and encouraging individuality.

10. Interpersonal Problem Solver: Promotes open discussion of conflicts between group members in order to resolve conflicts and increase group togetherness.*

*Adapted from Johnson and Johnson, Joining Together, 1975

HOW TASK AND MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS WORK TOGETHER

Advisory Councils have a job to do; they must set and meet goals, advise the director, motivate others for action, plan programs, develop communication systems, and evaluate the entire Community Education operation. These task functions are very important and to be successful they must be performed by the Council working together as a group.

Maintenance functions are equally as important; they provide the atmosphere of support, openness, and encouragement that allows members to give their best effort to complete the task. Without maintenance, the tasks performed by a council would not be a product of the total council; in fact, without maintenance the council could not function as a group.

If your council has all maintenance functions it will never accomplish anything. If your council has all task functions, the group will be without life and may soon die. Completing tasks and building a group that works well cannot be separated--each is necessary to the other, each enhances the other. Without a task to be done, group maintenance would become just another social event. Without maintenance, the selection and completion of a task would not be a joint group venture. The council would not work together as a unit, people would feel left out, and interest in the council would drop.

A council which has good maintenance will produce better results in accomplishing tasks because all council members will participate and will take a leadership role. When tasks are taken on by the entire council the knowledge, skills, and resources are greatly increased.

Maintenance functions, because they develop the atmosphere of acceptance, come first in the development of a council. As a council member, encourage your fellow members to get to know each other better. Take the time to listen to each other and learn about each other. Don't assume that just because you have been together for a while that you know each other. Plan time during each meeting for visiting, refreshments and sharing of personal experiences.

As the council matures and develops, the atmosphere of the meetings is more open and accepting and less time needs to be devoted to maintenance. More time can be given to the selection and completion of tasks, however group maintenance must never be overlooked.

Councils need to recognize when it is appropriate to perform each function. If a council is becoming a social event rather than a working unit, it is time for the task-function leaders to bring about a change. If a council is becoming an action-machine and either boredom or tension has set in, it is time for the maintenance-function leaders to bring about a change.

Every member of the council has a leadership role. Group-centered leadership means that leadership belongs to the group and is flexible. Situations determine what leadership functions are needed and who will perform those functions. Leadership is everybody's business in the successful advisory council.

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

The properly functioning Advisory Council depends upon the exchange of ideas and information, and on the clear transmission of meaning. A function of your advisory council is communication. Your council members communicate with each other, with the school administration, with the people they represent and with the community at large.

Communication has many definitions. This booklet will focus on the aspects of group communication. One of the most important processes in any group is how well members communicate with each other: who communicates, how often, and are messages clear or misunderstood. Communication refers to verbal (written and spoken words) and non-verbal expression (tone of voice, body posture, and gestures).

There are two roles in communication: the sender, who initiates the message, and the receiver, to whom the message is extended. Effective communication exists between people when the receiver interprets the sender's message in the same way the sender intended it.

What is the communication behavior like in your council? What is your communication behavior when you participate in your advisory council?

	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
1. I ask questions when I don't know or understand something.	_____	_____	_____
2. If I am not clear about what someone means, I relay my understanding of her comments and check to see if my understanding is accurate.	_____	_____	_____
3. I keep my real thoughts to myself.	_____	_____	_____
4. When I feel irritated or impatient with what's going on, I communicate my feelings to the group.	_____	_____	_____
5. I agree with another individual or like what he says without letting them know.	_____	_____	_____
6. I ask others to tell me what their opinion is of my work.	_____	_____	_____
7. I ask others who seem to be hurt or upset to express their feelings.	_____	_____	_____
8. I withhold personal feelings and stick to the facts in a discussion.	_____	_____	_____
9. I let the members know if I have any information about the current topic.	_____	_____	_____
10. I feel opportunities are provided for me during group discussion.	_____	_____	_____

The statements above deal with several aspects of communication in your advisory council. The first two items refer to whether communication is one or two-way. The third, fourth and fifth statements focus on your willingness to give feedback to the other members of your advisory council on how you are receiving and reacting to their messages. Items six and

seven refer to your willingness to ask for feedback about how your messages are being received and reacted to by the advisory council. Eight and nine deal with how willing you are to contribute or send relevant messages to your advisory council. The last statement relates to how you feel about the atmosphere of open communication in your advisory council meetings. Check your responses with those of the other council members to see if you have a communication problem and if the entire council has communication problems.

Group communication should be two-way communication. Two-way communication means there is a free exchange of ideas and information, and members of the council are allowed to participate anytime they wish. An example of one-way communication would be to give direction without allowing comments, questions or chances for discussion. Two-way communication requires more time for discussion, but it is less frustrating for the members who may want to add their information or feeling to the discussion. Goal-directed groups benefit from two-way communication because it allows for the input of many possible ways to reach the goal. Deciding to have two-way communication in your council will establish a climate of acceptance of a member's ideas.

Feedback consists of a restatement of the sender's message by the receiver and the receiver's response (either feelings, facts, answers) to the message. For feedback, the parties must agree to listen to each other, because the purpose of feedback is to assure that the message is understood and that the responder has the opportunity to react--with his feelings and information. The reason the word feedback is used is that the understanding of the message and the response to it are fed back to the person sending the message. She, in turn, feeds back her understanding of the receiver's answer or reaction.

There are certain skills involved in giving feedback to received messages. The two basic parts to receiving messages are:

* Understanding the sender's ideas and feelings.

* Letting the sender know you want to understand the ideas and feelings.

A basic weakness of many receivers is that they tend to judge or evaluate the message before they fully understand it. Because of this it is necessary to develop feedback skills which will indicate to the sender that you haven't judged the message and that you only want to understand it clearly. The specific skills for feedback are:

1. Paraphrase accurately the content of the message and feeling of the sender. When paraphrasing, use your own words but do not indicate any approval or disapproval of the message. Do not add or subtract from the message. You can react to the message after the sender is satisfied you have correctly restated the message.

2. Describe what you think the sender's feelings are. Again, do not indicate your feelings or give disapproval or approval.

3. State your interpretation of the message and negotiate until there is agreement as to the sender's meaning. When you both understand the sender's meaning you may reply to the statement. *

These three steps may seem somewhat awkward at first, but as you develop the skill of paraphrasing, you will find it easier. You can help your fellow advisory council members by asking for their feedback to messages you have sent. When you ask for feedback, you may get an idea about how clearly you communicate. If the other members have to ask a lot of simple questions, you may need some work on sending messages effectively.

The skill of sending messages effectively is outlined in the following eight steps. These skills are essential in developing effective communication.

1. When giving a message, use pronouns such as "I" or "my". This makes it clear to the receiver what you think. The use of terms such as "we," "most people," or "our" do not indicate whose opinion it is.

2. Be specific when sending a message. Try to include all the necessary information the receiver needs to understand the message.

*Adapted from Johnson and Johnson, Joining Together, 1975

3. Make your verbal and non-verbal message the same. A non-verbal message can strengthen a verbal message. If you say you like a person's performance and clap your hands at the same time, the non-verbal (clapping) message gives strength to the verbal praise. Verbal and non-verbal messages can conflict. If a person says "I am very nervous about the speech I am going to make in five minutes," while that person is lounging on a chair looking very relaxed, the receiver of the message does not know whether to believe the words or the non-verbal attitude.

4. Be repetitive with your messages. Use more than one form of communication such as gestures, pictures, diagrams, and written messages as well as the spoken messages.

5. Ask for feedback concerning how your messages are being received. This is a continual process and the only way you will ever be sure you are communicating effectively.

6. Consider the receiver's point of reference and direct your message to her/him. A change in how you state a message might be needed when talking about a subject to a child, to an adult, or to your best friend.

7. Describe your feelings by name in a unambiguous way. For example, "I feel happy when..." - not "I feel somewhat pleased when..." Be clear about your feelings.

8. Describe other council member behavior without making an evaluation or interpretation. It is better to say, "you are talking too loud," than to say "you are nothing but a loudmouth." *

These eight skills may seem logical to you and, perhaps just plain common sense, but it is surprising how soon we forget all these good ideas when someone says something we think is extremely wrong or threatening. You must remember that just because you communicate effectively doesn't necessarily ensure that the person you are trying to communicate with knows how to communicate effectively. It is your job to try and remain non-evaluating and to give feedback until the other person understands you and your message.

*Adapted from Johnson and Johnson, Joining Together, 1975

Check those areas of communication you now feel you handle well and list those areas in which you need further work. If you use the checklist in the fall and again in the spring, you can judge the progress that you and the entire council has made.

CHECKLIST OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

_____I am aware of my communication within the advisory council.

_____I understand the difference between effective and ineffective communication.

_____I effectively send clear messages.

_____I effectively receive messages.

_____I make my messages appropriate to the frame of reference of the receiver.

_____I recognize one-way communication procedures and can predict their consequences.

_____I give nonjudgmental feedback to other council members.

_____I recognize two-way communication procedures and can predict their consequences.

_____I contribute all relevant information I have to a group's discussion.

_____I ask for feedback from other council members.

_____I own the messages I send - that is, I say "I think," "I feel".

_____I include an honest statement of my feelings when I give feedback.*

The skills I need further work on are: _____

_____

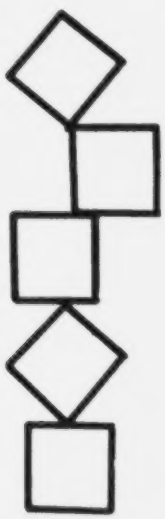
_____

_____

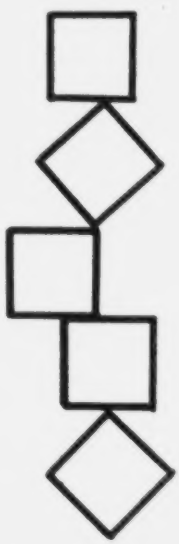
*Adapted from Johnson and Johnson, Joining Together, 1975

An exercise similar to the old game of telephone can be used to show the value of communication and the difference that clarifying by feedback makes.

> Draw a series of shapes on a piece of paper. (See example A below) Have one person describe the shapes to the other members of the council without allowing them to see the paper or ask any questions to clarify meaning. When the person who is describing the shapes has completed the task, have the other members show what they thought they were told to draw. Most, or many, will be wrong.
>
> Now, repeat the exercise with another set of equally difficult shapes, (see example B below) but this time allow the members to ask as many questions as they need to clarify what is being described. Most, or many, will be right.



EXAMPLE A



EXAMPLE B

This exercise should help the council realize the importance of two-way communication for clear understanding. You might ask the person describing the exercise what it felt like to explain the diagram without having any response from those making the drawing. The importance of sending clear messages is also shown in this exercise; a sender who describes the shapes clearly and accurately will be the cause of more correct reproductions of the shapes.

Although the communication skills discussed in this section refer to group communication, these skills are basically the same for all inter-personal communication--between parent and child, husband and wife, boss and employee, between people who work together, and between friends.

Perfecting the communication skills of each member of the advisory council is very important because only if the council can communicate can the community become aware of the process of Community Education in the community.

GROUP COHESION

You have probably been a member of several groups. In some of these groups you had a feeling of being part of the group, and if you missed a meeting, you felt sorry that you had missed out on something. In this type of group you were experiencing group cohesion, or the feeling of "belonging." The unity which is formed in a group which results in a sense or feeling of belonging to the cause is described as group cohesiveness. Group cohesion is very important for an advisory council if it is to work effectively.

In a group with high group cohesion, members feel a part of the group. They use terms like "our group," "our plan," "our program." The members are anxious to remain active and usually attend every meeting.

The following brief exercise will point out the feelings of the members of the advisory council to the council.

ASSESSING GROUP COHESIVENESS

	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
* The council has achieved most of its goals in the past year	_____	_____	_____
* Members generally attend all meetings	_____	_____	_____
* A high degree of trust exists among the advisory council members	_____	_____	_____
* What I say is recognized and valued in the advisory council	_____	_____	_____
* I am proud of being a member of the advisory council	_____	_____	_____
* I feel a strong ownership for our program and projects	_____	_____	_____
* Members of the advisory council really care about each other	_____	_____	_____
* New members are made to feel welcome	_____	_____	_____
* At meetings I feel included	_____	_____	_____
* If I miss a meeting I feel I have missed something important	_____	_____	_____
* Members work on tasks together	_____	_____	_____

If you agree with these statements you feel a high degree of cohesion with your advisory council. The entire council should complete the exercise and discuss the results. Don't be disappointed if all members don't agree with the statements. Just doing the exercise as a group requires some degree of trust (cohesion), so don't be surprised if some members show they feel left out.

Groups with high group cohesiveness are able to reach decisions more effectively and with less frustration because they are involved from a "we" basis and "good of the group" standpoint. With group cohesiveness, group goals can be established. Members work to support the group goals rather than merely to seek satisfaction of their personal goals.

The cohesiveness of a group is related to several factors, and one of the first to consider is the size of your advisory council. Groups of 10 to 20 are shown to have a good chance of being an effective operating unit. If your council is larger, you could break up into small subcommittees and do most of your work in them. The full council should meet only to consider decisions emanating from subcommittees. Small groups have higher cohesion with fewer members, the interaction between them increases. The more interaction in the council, the better the members feel about making a contribution which increases their satisfaction with goals of the group.

In a cohesive advisory council the members have a strong feeling of responsibility to the council and its purpose. The cohesive council at the same time is serving the needs of the individual members by providing:

*Security

*Recognition

*Prestige

*Achievement

All members of any group have these four needs. The good feelings that you have when these needs are met are the basis of group cohesion. If you, as a member, are not allowed a chance to speak, if no one pays attention, you will feel unrecognized. If you speak but no one acts as if what you say is important or if no one recognizes your contribution, you will feel unimportant and lacking in prestige. If you do not feel included and do not feel other members are happy to include you, then you will feel uncomfortable and lack security. If you do not have an active part in the group and if you are not included in the important tasks of the group, you will not feel a sense of accomplishment or achievement.

Your community can also provide recognition and prestige for the council member by acknowledging the importance of the

council and its work. This recognition can add to the group cohesiveness but it will not take the place of the recognition and the prestige earned within the council itself.

When belonging to the council is based solely on prestige, the members are not likely to risk their own status by giving an unpopular idea. If the council's attraction is based on accomplishment, membership will be satisfying for a time but as the need for recognition becomes greater and is not fulfilled, the accomplishments seem less important. You are likely to say "who cares what we have done." Recognition without accomplishment is shallow and will not last as the community begins to wonder what the council does. Security or the feeling of acceptance in a council is very important, but without accomplishment, prestige, or recognition, security is not enough. All four needs must be met in the council in order to establish the group cohesiveness which will sustain a task oriented advisory council. These four needs are interdependent and should be in balance for a council to have the full benefits of group cohesion.

The following steps will help to build cohesiveness in your advisory council:

* Allow time for members to get to know each other, especially when the council is new. This helps build trust and understanding between the members. Schedule refreshments and time to talk informally at each meeting.

* Give support to members' ideas, opinions and feelings. Ask members what they think, give them an opportunity to contribute.

* Make members feel their presence is needed at the meeting. Give them tasks to perform and tell them they are important.

* Identify with your council--think of your council as a team rather than a group of individuals. Talk about what "we" can do rather than what "I" can do.

* Build a council tradition--create history by having events the council can take pride in sponsoring. Do things the council is enthusiastic about: an annual Community Education fair, a bi-annual style show, a fishing contest, an awards dinner, and so on.

* Create recognition for council achievements--don't be afraid to blow your own horn. Send in articles to newspapers, radio and TV stations, school newsletters; give awards for outstanding achievement by the council members. Promote a feeling of pride in the work the council is doing.

* Set attainable group goals--be sure to have some short-range goals your group can achieve as well as some long-range goals. Develop a sense of accomplishment with your council members.

* Make sure that everyone shares in the work. Don't let a select few do all the important tasks.

* Involve the council in cooperative work with other committees. Group cohesion always increases when one group works with another. The feeling of representing your group and its goals and purpose increases when brought into a situation with another group, provided this is not done continually or in a competitive manner. Cooperation is the key to doing something with another group.

Cohesiveness is not static; it is always changing and will be present in varying degrees for each member at the same time. If the group starts to decrease in cohesiveness it may be necessary to change the balance of the forces inside the group. For example, if an unresolved conflict is not attended, it will eventually erode the cohesiveness in terms of security. Steps should be taken to build up the security for the members. Attraction for a group weakens if there is frustration over the inability to reach the group's goals. The goals may be too ambitious and there may be a need to reassess the goals.

Levels of group cohesion may be measured by the members arriving on time for meetings, staying until the meeting ends, the trust and support present among the council members, the degree of individuality accepted in the council, and the amount of fun members have. Cohesion can also be assessed just by asking members how accepted they feel in the group and if they plan to continue membership with council.

Group cohesion is a good indication of the health of your advisory council. In order to have a healthy council you must have shared leadership and effective communication.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The three components of effective councils which this booklet discussess--group-centered leadership, communication, and group cohesiveness--are all part of the fabric that makes up a dynamic, integrated group. Though discussed separately, they cannot really be separated in practice.

All three have the same ultimate goals; the accomplishment of tasks and the creation of a group environment in which members feel comfortable and work well together to accomplish the tasks.

Shared leadership ensures that all of the resources of the group will be used productively and it allows each member of the group to share the recognition, satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment that accompany leadership. Group cohesion is strong when leadership is shared because, in addition to promoting the good feelings found in a cohesive group, shared leadership gives each member a sense of group ownership. Effective communication is part of group-centered leadership and group cohesion and is the bridge between them.

A strong council in which all members feel pride and acceptance, in which all members participate freely and openly, and in which the leadership role is flexible and shared, is the ideal council.

This is the goal for which we all should strive.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW?

(The questions at the beginning of the Guidebook are repeated below. Now that you have read and studied the materials, you may wish to go back over the questions again to check your knowledge and understanding of the main ideas contained in the Guidebook.)

1. How do you decide who holds a leadership role in a group?
2. What is leadership?
3. How does group-centered leadership differ from single-person leadership?
4. What are task functions in a group?
5. What are maintenance functions in a group?
6. Is the most effective council one that stresses task roles or one that stresses maintenance roles?
7. What is group communication?
8. What is the difference between one-way and two-way communication?
9. Define feedback and how it functions.
10. Why does the expression of members' feelings as well as their opinions contribute to effective communication?
11. What is an "I" message and why are "I" messages important to understanding?
12. What is the effect on members' reactions when verbal and non-verbal messages contradict each other?
13. What is group cohesiveness?
14. How does the size of a group affect group cohesiveness?
15. How does an effective council provide security and recognition for its members?
16. How are prestige and achievement needs of members met in a group that has strong group cohesion?
17. What efforts can groups make to build group cohesiveness?
18. How do group leadership, effective communication, and strong group cohesion combine to build a vital group?

SUGGESTED READINGS

Doyle, Michael, and David Straus. How To Make Meetings Work. Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976

This book presents an innovative approach to the smooth conduct of meetings. It introduces the concept of using a group facilitator in addition to the group chairperson to ensure the flow of group interaction. The book also discusses using a "group memory"--a visual outline of points being discussed--to keep members on track.

Gordon, Thomas. Leader Effectiveness Training L.E.T. New York: Wyden Books, 1977

Dr. Gordon tells how to develop positive behaviors in yourself and in others for building group productivity and creativity. The book stresses the importance of honest, clear communication and points out how to modify styles of communication that are destructive to groups.

Guthrie, Eileen and Warren Sam Miller. Making Change: A Guide To Effectiveness in Groups. Minneapolis: Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 1978

This friendly, readable book tells how groups operate, describes methods for making groups work well, and discusses ways in which to use communication effectively in a group.

Johnson, David W. and Frank P. Johnson. Joining Together. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975

This book is a primer of group skills and group dynamics. The authors through the use of examples and exercises, involve the reader in group skill practices. The exercises lend themselves to group activity and help to build communication and cohesiveness in the council.

Keys to Community Involvement Series. Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1978

"Effective Groups: Guidelines for Participants," Number 9.

"Group Progress: Recognizing and Removing Barriers," Number 10.

"Measuring and Improving Group Effectiveness," Number 11.

"Group Leadership: Understanding, Guiding, and Sharing," Number 15.

The Keys to Community Involvement Series are 15 small booklets developed by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. They are written in a clear, easy-to-understand style and cover all facets of group process. The booklets contain helpful charts and checklists which aid in understanding group effectiveness.